

Paul Bengener_Falling Walls Pt1_(C)

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SPEAKERS

Paul Bengener



Paul Bengener 00:00

Today we're starting a new series. It's called falling wars. It's based on the story of Joshua and the battle of Jericho. And I want to read some verses today from Joshua chapter five starting at verse 13. And I'm just going to tip over into chapter six and read a couple of verses there as well. He says this. Now, when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and he saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to the man and asked him, Are you for us? Or are you for our enemies? Neither, he replied. But as commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come. Then Joshua fell face down to the ground, in reverence and asked him, What message does my Lord have for his servant, the commander of the Lord's army replied, take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy, and Joshua did so. Now the gates of Jericho was securely barred because of the Israelites, no one went in, and no one came down. Jericho was in lockdown. Then the Lord said to Joshua, see, I have delivered Jericho into your hands along with its King. And it's fighting men, let me pray. And then I'll get into the message today. Lord, I thank you for today. And I thank you that we can come to these scriptures. And we can come to the Your Word, and Holy Spirit, I asked you today just speak to every one of us, every person that's watching wherever they are, wherever they from, just speak your word into our hearts today, in Jesus name. And everybody said, Amen.



Paul Bengener 01:34

The title of my message today, as the first part of this series is a hard place can be a holy

place. I don't know if you notice verse 15, where this person that Joshua meets on his way to Jericho, with a drawn sword, he says to him, take off your sandals, because the place where you're standing, is holy ground, a hard place can be a holy place. When I think of a holy place, what do I think of? Well, I think, first of all other place where God is present, I think of a place that God will use a place where God will be at work. And I think of a place where God gets the glory. And right now, in this season, in this experience, that we're all having many of us would term that this potentially is a hard place. But I want to declare today for those reasons, that this is also a holy place, a hard place can be a holy place. You know, the verses that we've just read, and the chapters that come before it like now are a moment of transition, a moment when things will probably never be the same again. The Israelites have been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. They've escaped Egypt 40 years earlier, but they've been wandering around in the desert for 40 years without a permanent home without a permanent place. Moses, their leader, their heroe, the one who's brought them out of Egypt, brought them into the desert has just died. And now Joshua is the new leader. And God is leading them and speaking to them now and saying to them, it's time to cross the Jordan River. It's time to possess the land that the Lord promised to Abraham. This is your moment, this is your moment of transition, your moment of stepping in and going into the land. It was a moment of great expectation, but it was also a moment of opposition and difficulty and hardship. You see, there were people already in the land and they didn't want the Israelites to enter. We've just read that. Actually, the what the city of Jericho was shut up, it was locked up. They were in lockdown. It was a hard place. But it was a holy place. And it was a holy place because God was with them. It was a holy place. Because God was about to use the hardship he was about to use the opposition that they faced. And he was about to be at work in this situation. And it was a holy place. Because God was going to get the glory. I don't know about you, but I'm often excited about transition. I love new things. I think many humans do many, many of us love the new we love, like a new job or a new home, we get excited about the possibilities. A new car or a new project, something new we love the new in our lives. I love that journey from the old to the new. I love that anticipation that we're going from one place to another place. I love that shift. I love that transition. But in every transition in every shift, there's always obstacles, there is always opposition. And that was true for Joshua. That was true for the Israelites. It was true for them in this history that we've just mentioned the fact that we went from slaves, and now they got to learn to be sons the fact that they went from survivors, and now they got to learn to be settlers. But it also feels to me like we're in a season like that right now that 2020 is a season of transition that we're shifting from one place to another place, and things won't quite ever be the same again. And many people are saying that. But you know, a lot of what we're saying, and a lot of what we're thinking is just speculation, because the truth is, we don't really know. But I do believe that this is a moment of transition. And I believe that this story, Joshua, chapters one to six, speaks so powerfully into this moment that we're living in right now. It's a transition moment for

them just like it's a transition moment for us. And it's the transition moment that's filled for them with obstacles, it's gonna be filled with walls that stand in their way, sometimes literal walls, like the walls of Jericho that we'll get to, as we go through these messages in the series, fortified walls, not just city walls, but actually fortified walls that were occupied by soldiers and armies that were going to prevent the people going forward. You know, a change moment, is not just a moment of excitement. But it can also be a moment that can be filled with fear. You know, some people like me are excited by change and change and anticipate change, but other people are fearful of change. That's just a human response. And we're all different and respond in different ways. In change moments of transitions, we can feel overwhelmed, we can feel ill equipped, and we can fail or completely disrupted. And all of those feelings, these passages speak to today. It's a hard place for Joshua. But it's also a holy place. It's a hard place for the children of Israel, but it's also a holy place. Because God is present. God is at work, and God will ultimately get the glory. You know, in this story, God begins to speak to Joshua,

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Paul Benger 07:04

I love that because Joshua is not alone. As the leader, the people are not alone, as the people of God, God is with them. And he begins to guide them. And his presence is, is there with them, and God is guiding them through. And I want to share three things with us today, that I believe in these opening chapters of the book of Joshua, leading up to the moment we've just read. Three things that God teaches Joshua, as he begins to walk with Him through this moment of transition, as he begins to walk with Him. Notice that God walking with Him through this hard place, into a holy place, has the three things that I want to share with you. The first is this. keep trusting, keep trusting, because battles give birth to new faith, keep trusting. I don't know if you've ever prayed, Lord gave me more faith. I know I have. Many times I need more faith, Lord, I need, I need more faith to trust you. But I wonder if we were to pray that prayer. And God said to us, okay, you've asked for more faith, here comes a great battle. I wonder if I would take that deal. If God said, there's more faith on offer, but there comes the battle to produce the faith. I'm not sure I'd take that deal. I'm not sure how to take those odds. But one thing I'm certain of, is this that battles, birth faith, if you keep trusting, you know, we need to know this. We need to know that this is true that when we face opposition, and when we face situations and obstacles in our lives, that it has the potential to birth, greater faith within us. I want to say this today, as we we look at these verses that were God guides, the enemy resists. You know, the Christians were notoriously bad at this. We prefer this saying where God guides he provides. And that saying is true, and I believe it, but the format saying is true. Also, we prefer to think like this, that if God's in it, everything will go perfectly well. We default to that thinking. If there's a struggle, if somebody is going through something difficult. Sometimes we stand back and we look and think what did they do wrong? That's a

common response. We know we only have to read the scriptures. The every time God moves, the enemy resists, every time God wants to take his people forward. There's obstacles and opposition. But those obstacles and that opposition are opportunities for God to birth, greater faith within us. You've only got to look at the life of Jesus who was in constant opposition in his life. And was he ever out of the will of God? Of course not. Jesus never stepped out of the will of God and yet he faced continual opposition. You see I believe when there's a battle when there is a fortress in your way, when something is saying to you no further, it means you're on the verge of something significant. In my own personal life, I can say, this has been true whenever God has wanted to take me forward whenever God has wanted us to move ahead in our personal life, there's always been opposition, there's always been resistance. There's always been a battle. I can also tell you that having led IKON church for over well over 30 years now that that's also been true in the life of our church, whenever God has wanted us to step forward, there's always been resistance. You see, our problem is that we rarely recognise a miracle when we're in the midst of it. And our further problem is that when we read this story, we know how it ends. Joshua didn't know how it ended. We know what God is about to do. We know that God is going to get the glory, we know that supernaturally these walls that are preventing him, these armies that are against him are gonna fall down. But Joshua didn't know that. All that Joshua knew was keep trusting, keep trusting, and the battle will produce new faith. You know, in chapter one, God speaks to Joshua very clearly, Joshua, you need to be strong and courageous. You know, we know how Joshua feels his hero has just died. He feels ill equipped, he feels overwhelmed. He, he's traumatised almost by this situation. He feels alone, he feels afraid. And yet God says to him, Joshua Be strong and courageous. That's in in chapter one and verse six, in chapter one and verse seven, God says, Now Joshua, be strong, and very courageous. He kind of emphasises this, don't just Be strong and courageous, but be strong and very courageous. Because you are going to lead these people, and you hear God encouraging him about what's about to happen. And then Joshua, one in verse nine, it'll come on the screen, God says to him, Have I not commanded you Be strong, and very courageous? Don't you think that's a word for us today, be strong and very courageous. For I am with you, you know, the battle is an opportunity for a fresh revelation of who God is. And therefore, it's a breeding ground for new faith. In that same chapter, chapter one, God says to Joshua, I will never leave you or forsake you. I know Jesus says that, you know, hundreds of years later, but God said it to Joshua, I will never leave you or forsake you. In chapter three, God says to Joshua, consecrate yourself, tell the people consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, I'm going to do amazing things. And that tomorrow, in Joshua's tomorrow, Joshua would have before him a swollen river, he would have a fortified city. And Joshua was about to say God at work, and through God being at work and through him, keeping trust in his faith would grow. And I believe in this season that's going to happen to you and it's going to happen to me that we will have our obstacles we will have our walls in our way. But we will see as we

keep trusting our faith grow, and God do amazing things, consecrate yourself, God says to Joshua, it means give yourself to God for tomorrow, I will do amazing thing. This is a moment to keep trusting. And as we do, new first, new faith will be birthed within us.

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Paul Benger 13:41

Secondly, God speaks to Joshua over these chapters that are mentioned in and talking about keep moving, keep trusting, and keep moving. Keep moving because battles give birth to new places. You know, I've already said they're moving from being survivors to settlers. They're moving from being wanderers to residents. They're moving from being drifters to dwellers. And this was the promised land and this was their time to come in, and to begin to settle and to begin to occupy that land no longer just wandering around. In a wilderness. God says It's time. It's time for you to cross over. I wonder what it's time for in your life. I wonder what it's time for in my life. I wonder what it's time for right now. I believe it's time for something. I believe that we've been born for such a time for this and it's time for God to do something amazing. amongst us. The first obstacle as I've already mentioned, was the river and the river was going to be in flood, but then they were gonna face Jericho as they tried to travel inland. They were going to face this fortified city, the city that was guarded. And the Scriptures say in chapter six and verse one, and I love the translation that says it like this, that Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. It was heavily fortified and, and it was in lockdown. And there is no wonder, because archaeologists tell us that Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world. In fact, they tell us that they have evidence now that it's been inhabited for about 11,000 years. Jericho was in lockdown, nothing coming in, nothing going out. Does that feel familiar? Nothing coming in, nothing going out. But you can't lock down the Holy Spirit. You can't lock down the church, you can't stop God's purposes going forward. And as long as we keep trusting, and as long as we keep moving, we are going to say God's purposes keep moving forward. And that's why we need to keep moving forward. You see, we need to keep moving forward, because movement, advances relationships, that when you move forward, you find that there are people who come with you on that journey and you find your running partners, your your life partners going forward on that journey. In Amos three and verse three, in the New Living Translation, it says there's can two people walk together without agree in the direction. The New King James Version puts it like this, can two walk together unless they be agreed? You see, Joshua did things differently to Moses, when Moses was moving out of Egypt into the wilderness. You remember, Moses sent 12 spies into the wilderness, into the land of Canan. And when the 12 came back, he gathered all the people to hear the report. And of course, 10 of the spies were negative. And because of that the people did not go with Joshua did things very differently. Because he knew he needed relationship with people of faith. So Joshua sent two spies, and he sent them in secret. And when they came back, he didn't have them stand in front of all the people. He had them speak to

him, so that he could still be the leader, full of faith, full of vision. And he could stand in front of the people and say, consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow, God will do great things, he wasn't going to make the same mistake. He wasn't going to make the same mistake that Moses had made, he was actually going to stand up and be a leader that says, We can do this, we can go forward. I want to say to you right now, be careful who you walk within the season. Be careful who you want within this season, because if you walk with the wrong people, you may not make it through. That's why this matters. He says this is a season for you to lean into your people. This is the season for you to find those positive, those faithful friends, those positive voices, because movement, advances relationships, movement advances momentum. A couple of weeks ago, we said a phrase, and I believe it's become a phrase for our church. And it's this. We're not just getting through this, but we're stopping in the middle. And we're taking something from it. This is exactly what the children of Israel did. I want to read three verses from Chapter Four of Joshua chap, Joshua, chapter four verses 123. And it says this when the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, choose 12 men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down in a place where you stay tonight. Can you see what happening? You say they didn't just come through the Jordan, they stopped in the middle, and they took something from it. That's exactly what we're going to do in the season. What's exactly what God is going to do in our lives, we're going to grow individually, I believe we're going to grow as a church, I believe our relationships and our connections are going to get stronger. Our practices may shift, but they will be good in a good way that will cause growth and will cause life for us. We'll find ourselves in a new place. And we'll find that when we get to that new place. We haven't just took the stuff we had from the old place. No, we stopped in the middle. And we picked up some things. And we've took that with us. keep trusting, keep moving, because battles give birth to new places.

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Paul Bengert 19:25

And then the final thing I want to share is this keep surrendering. Keep surrendering, keep trusting, keep moving, keep surrendering. Keep surrendering because battles give birth to new and clearer decisions. Let me read those out in verses. I started with again, from chapter five, just a couple of verses. It says when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and he saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword. Joshua went up to him and asked Are you for us? Or are you for our enemies? Neither he replied, but ask commander of the army of the Lord, I have come. Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence and asked him What message does my Lord have for a servant? And the commander of the Lord's army replied, take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy. And Joshua, did it. Imagine walking towards a city that you have no

idea what you're going to do and how you're going to overcome. You're not you're not a warrior people. You're a bunch of nomads. You've been wandering around in the desert. You're not you're not fighting people. Sometimes we can read the Old Testament and think that No, they're not a fighting people. They're just a wandering people as they come into this Promised Land. But Joshua's first decision is to fight. He sees a man with a drawn sword. And he said, right, I'm going to fight. But I'm so glad that Joshua didn't choose to fight that day, that actually Joshua chose worship. And he chose surrender. You know, some of us have chosen in our lives to fight God. Some of us have chosen to resist God and to resist God's word and to resist what God wants to do. I want to encourage you today to put down your swords, and choose worship and surrender. He says, sometimes we think in life, that we've got to chop down everything in our way, that we've got to have all the answers, that we have to be Superman or Superwoman. But there's a better choice to make today, there's a better decision, and that decision is worship, and surrender. You remember the third definition of a holy place I shared at the beginning, a place where God gets the glory. And when we choose worship, and surrender over fighting, and wrestling, when we chose to surrender our lives, then God gets the glory. You see, there's things we can't do. There's things we can't control. And so often we worry about those things that are just outside of our control, control those things we didn't choose. And we had no option in the matter around those things. We have no control over certain circumstances. But there's things we can choose today. And we can choose to worship. Take off your sandals, Joshua. Because the place where you're standing is holy ground. We can choose to worship, we can choose surrender. And Joshua did sell. He obeyed God. You see when we choose worship, and when we choose surrender, we let God get the glory. When we let God take the glory, it takes the pressure of us. We don't have to be Superman or Superwoman. We don't have to pretend to be something that we're not, we can just choose to worship. And we can let God be the hero of our story. Don't you want that I want that. And I'm not concerned about being the hero of my story. I'm not concerned about being the hero that people look up to. And I love it when God gets the glory. And when you and I choose worship, and when you and I choose surrender, that's what happens. We let God know when we choose worship and surrender that we're on his side. And we stop asking him to be on our side. I love this story. Because Joshua says, Whose side are you on? He says to the man, and the man says, I'm not on either side. I'm not on your side. And I'm not on the enemy side. I'm actually here as the commander of the Lord's armies. The question is, Whose side are you on? You know, I love that. Whose side are you on? You see when there's a Jericho in your way, is good to know whose side you're on. When there's a fortified city, when there's walls that need to come down, it's good to know whose side you are on. Joshua made a clear and better decision in that moment. In the moment, when he chose surrender. He made the decision to let God do the fighting. He made the decision to worship instead of fighting himself, he made the decision to give God the glory and take the pressure off himself. He made a decision to

trust God's power within him rather than his own strength. I've got one more scripture and then I'm going to pray and we're going to close it's the scripture we use a lot of IKON Church, it's Ephesians chapter three and verse 20. I'm going to read verse 21, as well because it fits so well with this message. Not to him, he was able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us. To him be glory, in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Joshua made the decision to hand his life, his circumstances, his future, over to God. What do you need to hand over to God today? What do you need to give to God today? I want to encourage you today to choose to worship. I want you to encourage you today to choose surrender. And I believe there is many people who are watching today that this is your day to surrender your life to Christ to surrender your life to follow in Jesus.